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ABSTRACT

State boards and schools need to reframe how they view the role of public education. The time children spend in school cannot be kept separate from everything else happening in their lives. The National Association of State Boards of Education Study Group believes that academic achievement is linked to the development of the whole child and that the most successful academic strategies are connected to the child's social, physical, and emotional development. The study group makes four recommendations to state boards of education: (1) boards should set standards for creating positive school environments that foster academic achievement and support the development of children and youth; (2) they should take the leadership role in creating a shared vision and sense of responsibility with others for helping children and youth to succeed academically in school and become productive members of society; (3) they should work collaboratively with other policymakers in the development and implementation of early childhood and prekindergarten programs; and (4) they should work with schools and others to combine and coordinate resources across agencies and public/private sectors in support of children's success. Appendix A contains a list of presenters to the study group, and Appendix B describes new brain research. (Contains 42 references.) (RT)

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The Future Is Now:

Addressing Social Issues in Schools of the 21st Century

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The Future Is Now

Addressing Social Issues in Schools of the 21st Century

The Report of the
NASBE Study Group on
Confronting Social Issues:
The Role of Schools

NASBE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION

October
1999

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Foreword

Schools are facing many new challenges in preparing students for the future. Many of these challenges arise from the complexities of society today and the ways society continues to change into the coming century. Indeed, the social context in which students live has an impact on their ability to learn and to effectively transition into adulthood. Many children and youth must navigate obstacles such as violence in their communities and schools, lack of family and community stability and resources, and the messages offered in the popular media, while still developing the academic and social skills necessary to compete in an ever changing job market and economy.

Such concerns have sparked a national debate around the role of schools in addressing the issues that impact the ability of students to learn. Is there a role for schools in meeting the developmental needs of students while still maintaining the central role of schools as institutions for academic preparation? Where does the responsibility for dealing with barriers to learning lie? Where are the resources to meet such needs? *The NASBE Study Group on Confronting Social Issues: The Role of Schools* was commissioned to explore these issues and to report its findings to the education community.

In January 1999, the study group began examining these issues. The group explored a number of related topics, including the developmental needs of children, promising school-based strategies that promote learning, various ways that services and supports can be connected to schools, and the implications these strategies have for the funding and organization of the school. Over a six-month period, study group members reviewed the relevant literature; invited experts and practitioners in the fields of education, psychology, finance, and human and community services to meet with the group; examined how various states and individual schools have addressed this topic; and shared their own experiences and insights as state policymakers.

As a result of its research and analysis, **the study group firmly believes that schools have an important role to play in addressing the needs of students by helping them succeed academically and by supporting the growth that will enable them to lead successful, productive adult lives.** The question is not *whether* schools should address non-academic barriers to learning but *what* they can do both alone and with others to support learning.

Summary Recommendations

A New Vision for the Role of Schools

State boards and schools need to reframe how they view the role of public education. The time children spend in school cannot be kept separate from everything else going on in their lives. Schools operate within a larger context, and separating academics from social and developmental issues is a false dichotomy. The study group believes that:

- Academic achievement is linked to the development of the whole child, from birth to adulthood. In fact, the most successful academic strategies are also connected to the social, physical, and emotional development of the child.
- Schools themselves must change if they are to meet the needs of 21st century students.
- The turn of the century is a unique time when both the public and private sectors have begun finding creative ways to join their visions and resources and to reframe how they support children, families, and communities.
- State boards must use their leadership role to develop and to sustain a vision that actively both promotes change at the building level and fosters collaboration among schools, state and local agencies, and the private and non-profit sectors.

Schools will continue to play a major role in the development of children while the social context and children themselves are changing and will continue to change. Schools and state boards cannot ignore these changes and new challenges. They can, however, ensure that whatever the changing social context, schools provide students with the kind of environment that supports their human needs for growth and learning. Those developmental challenges and how they can be addressed are well-researched and documented. The study group believes that both state boards and schools need to apply this knowledge. Failure to do this will mean wasted lives, opportunities, and resources.

The Study Group on Confronting Social Issues: The Role of the Schools makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1

State boards of education should set standards for creating positive school environments that foster academic achievement and support the development of children and youth.

While schools receive substantial guidance regarding their academic offerings, there are few policies or accountability measures that address what kind of learning environment a school provides. State boards need to look at the issue of the school as a learning environment and to address what schools should look like if they are to provide learning opportunities for everyone. While each state will have to explore this issue in the context of the populations it serves, the study group recommends the following as universal characteristics that define a supportive learning environment:

- **Setting high academic standards for all students.** State boards of education can play a significant role in helping children and youth succeed by providing all students with the opportunity to reach high standards of learning. State boards of education should adopt clearly articulated goals and high expectations at the same time they communicate their faith in each student's ability to achieve standards.

- **Providing academic support services for students at risk of academic failure.** State boards should adopt policies that support the goal of all students learning to read by third grade and provide guidelines, resources, and technical assistance for establishing supports like tutoring programs, Saturday academies, and alternative education schools.

- **Making school salient to students' sense of the future.** Helping students develop an understanding of how school work relates to the "real world" and their own future plans makes it more likely that students will stay in school and perform better. State boards should adopt policies and guidelines that promote community service and school-to-work programs that in turn relate back to the school curriculum.

- **Providing character and civics education.** Increasingly into the next century, schools must help students understand the diversity, values, and history of their communities and nation, as well as their own individual and collective responsibility to civic and democratic life. State boards need to encourage incorporation of shared values in ways that are not only infused into the curriculum, but into all aspects of the school environment, as well as provide guidance concerning the objectives of civics education.

- **Adding standards for health and family life education.** In addition to emphasizing the academic mission of the school, providing a comprehensive health and family health program helps students avoid risky behaviors, such as substance abuse, and remain in school. State boards should develop standards and assessments for health and family life education in the schools.

- **Reducing class and school size.** The size of the school and class influence how a student relates to the school. Smaller classes in the early years improve current progress and have long-term effects on the student's school experiences, especially for at-risk children. Smaller schools engender a greater sense of belonging and involvement regardless of grade level. State boards will have hard choices to make as the continued increase in enrollment further strains the capacity of the existing infrastructure, but they should make a commitment to encourage and invest in strategies that promote smaller schools and smaller primary classes.

- **Reviewing comprehensiveness of teacher preparation.** Teachers need to know the subject matter if they are going to help students reach high standards, be skillful in instructional techniques if they are going to engage students with different learning styles, and understand students' developmental needs if they are going to provide an appropriate learning environment. State boards need to review certification requirements across the grade spectrum to see that teachers meet all three kinds of knowledge requirements. Moreover, state boards need to encourage in-service programs that provide teachers already in the system with the appropriate knowledge.

RECOMMENDATION 2

State boards of education should take the leadership role in creating a shared vision and sense of responsibility with others for helping children and youth to succeed academically in school and to become productive members of society.

The well-being of our children is a shared societal responsibility. State boards of education should work with others outside the school system to provide the array of support services that students may need. In addition, state boards of education should work with others to provide the before- and after-school programs that have been shown to enhance the sense of connection and safety vital to student success. This requires that state boards of education play an active role in creating a shared vision and sense of responsibility by:

- fostering collaboration with other state policymakers and agencies; and,
- initiating a dialogue with schools, families, and communities to develop a local understanding of what is needed to support student learning and a successful transition to adulthood.

RECOMMENDATION 3

State boards of education should work collaboratively with other policymakers in the development and implementation of early childhood and pre-kindergarten programs.

Children with a strong and healthy developmental foundation are more likely to come to school ready-to-learn. State boards of education should strongly encourage other policymakers and stakeholders to ensure that quality prenatal and early childhood care and other supports are provided to families in need of these services. In addition, state boards of education should consider recommending that schools provide pre-kindergarten programs, especially in communities of high need.

RECOMMENDATION 4

State boards of education should work with schools and others to combine and to coordinate resources across agencies and public/private sectors in support of children's success.

Resources are finite, and education like other sectors of the government must live within budget allocations, a circumstance that often sacrifices student supports not directly tied to the classroom. State boards can help schools maximize funding in support of students by:

- reviewing and streamlining policies and regulations, such as categorical funding, to provide local schools more flexibility in how the budget is allocated;
- targeting funds to schools serving populations more in need;
- providing technical assistance to help local schools identify, access, and best utilize additional resources; and,
- providing guidelines for pooling resources with other entities.

State boards can also take an active role in developing strategies for accessing and maximizing public and private dollars at the state level that can be used to address the academic and developmental needs of students.

Chapter 1
Introduction: A Changing Society Now and in the 21st Century

Over the last several decades, American society has been changing in fundamental ways, some of which are obvious, but some of which are more subtle. Of particular concern to educators, these shifts in society and the economy have created new dynamics and problems that have significant implications for schools. The explosion of technology and information; the pervasive influence of sensationalistic television, movies, and other media; the need to address ethnic and cultural differences; dynamic transformations in the economy and job market; and changes in family structures have all contributed to significant societal shifts that traditional institutions—including schools—have had trouble keeping up with. Consider the following trends:

- **The population is becoming more diverse.** Due to trends in birth rates and immigration, we are increasingly becoming a country of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. In 1980, 74 percent of the children in the United States were non-Hispanic white. By 1998, that percentage had declined to 65 percent, and projections show that in another 25 years only about half of the children in the country will be white. In contrast, the number of Hispanic children has grown dramatically, from 9 percent in 1980, to 15 percent in 1998, to a projected 20 percent in 2020. The Asian/Pacific Islander population has also increased, while the number of non-Hispanic black children has remained fairly constant at 15 percent (Forum of Child and Family Statistics, 1999). It is important to note that while such figures help us to visualize the America of tomorrow, these statistics are based upon the Census Bureau's general categorizations of race and ethnicity and therefore mask a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds as children increasingly claim mixed heritages. What is clear, however, is that these overall trends represent a greater diversity of cultures, religions, and languages now and in the years to come—and create a challenge for schools that are already struggling to weave many cultures into their social fabric.

- **The family structure is also changing.** The traditional nuclear family has been changing. By 1996, only 68 percent of children lived with two parents, compared with 88 percent in 1960. In fact, about half of all children spend at least some time in a single-parent family. This reflects the fact that half of all marriages end in divorce and that almost one-third of the births since 1994 were to unmarried women (compared to 18 percent in 1980). Even when a child lives in a "two-parent" home, this does not necessarily mean that both adults are that child's birth parents. In addition, the increased participation of women in the work force (more than three-quarters of all women who have school-age children are now working outside of the home) has greatly augmented the number of children who do not have a parent waiting for them at the end of a school day (Forum of Child and Family Statistics, 1999). On average there is a 20- to 25-hour per week gap between the time parents work and the time children spend in school, and many fill

Portraits of School Life

"Johnny" is having a hard time concentrating during his first and second period class at Little Blue Elementary school. While his teacher is trying to have him focus on his homework, Johnny is trying to ignore the recurrent pain in his empty stomach.

Sarah approaches the entrance of her middle school with a sense of apprehension. She is trying to anticipate who will be the first one to ridicule her physical appearance and point out her lack of brand-name clothing. "Which of the other girls will be the first to call me a cow?" she wonders. "Oh well," she says to herself, "it is just another day at school."

Fernando, Lawrence, and Billy are sitting by themselves in the school cafeteria. They are the "freaks," "nerds," and "rejects" of the school, never invited to parties. The three eat their lunch quietly, attempting to sidestep their classmates' taunting and trying not to become the butt of today's practical joke. They will feel lucky if the gym teacher does not join in the laughter when one of them faints in class. Fernando is trying to forget the remarks about his accent that he heard whispered while he was in line at the cafeteria.

Jennifer is trying to map out the safest route back home after school, struggling with how to navigate the street corners where "the guys" hang out. She also has to concentrate on avoiding the jocks in the hallway that always try to pinch her and get her to "loosen up." If only home were any better. The house will be empty when she gets there. At least she can get on-line and chat with Mister Dad; he seems to care about her.

In a suburban middle school, Josh is weighing whether he should report finding a swastika on his locker to the school principal. He thinks it's the right thing to do but doesn't know if anyone will care; after all, the "n" jokes about Samuel are still there on the bathroom stall. Anyway, the faculty is busy today. They have planned a crisis management drill using the scenario that an estranged husband has shot one of their colleagues and that the attacker is still inside the school building.

in those hours without supervision—indeed, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that over one-third of all 12-year-olds care for themselves during those hours (National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 1998). In all, schools are forced to contend with many children who are searching for more stability and structure in their everyday lives.

- **The work force has changed.** There have been significant shifts in both the types of jobs available and the composition of the work force. Manufacturing is no longer a dominant sector, as factory jobs declined from 34 percent to just 19 percent of all jobs between 1959 and 1994 (Zehr, 1998). There have been concurrent rises in the service and office sectors, the latter accounting for 41 percent of jobs in 1994. This in part reflects the growth in technology, with computer and data processing services identified as the industry with the fastest employment growth into the next decade (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1997). At the same time, technology and the need for higher reasoning skills have permeated many traditional employment sectors, from auto repair to agriculture. Such shifts have made education even more important to a sound financial future, and high school graduates have seen relative declines in wages, while college graduates have maintained their wage level by moving into the

growing sectors of employment. With well-paying jobs for unskilled workers on the decline, the nation can ill afford *not* to educate all students to high academic standards.

- **There is a growing income disparity within our society.** The proportion of children living in high-income families increased from 17 percent in 1980 to 25 percent in 1997. Yet despite the economic prosperity and low unemployment rates of the 1990s, the poverty rate for children has remained at about 19 percent (a statistic that has held fairly constant from 1980 to 1997). This is in part due to the large proportion of single-parent households, which are less likely to have access to the same economic or human resources as those in two-parent families. In fact, almost half of the female-headed families were also poor (Forum of Child and Family Statistics, 1999). And schools, as reflections of their communities, are continuing to struggle with equity issues both in terms of funding and in terms of the social and academic fallout of this disparity.

- **Children and youth are becoming increasingly worldly and alienated at an earlier age.** In a society based upon disposable products, where it seems that social skills are taught by video games and a child's self-worth is determined by the brand of his or her shoes, immediate gratification and a sense of expendability can take precedence over a respect for people as human beings and a determination to see problems through to the end. For young people, living in the present without a sense of belonging and connection has contributed to an alienation that is becoming increasingly visible in schools—and at times, deadly. Compounding this alienation are a number of factors—including the fact that teenagers today reach puberty two or three years earlier than in 1900 and that young people have vastly increased access to improved transportation and communication technologies—all of which make it easier for children to become more knowledgeable and worldly at an earlier age, often before they are ready to handle the consequences of their actions.

It has been said that "there are three legs holding up the stool that supports a culture's social well-being: the home and family, the church, and education. Yet in America today, the home and family have never been in such disrepair. The church's influence continues to diminish. Now education—the only leg with the teeth of law—has become the 'glue' institution. Education is what's left to keep us going until the other legs become strong again."

—Carolyn Warner, former Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction and NASBE 1996 Policy Leader of the Year

Together, these trends amount to an enormous amount of change in a relatively short time—and call for significant transformation in our social institutions, schools in particular, in order to keep pace. Yet some may ask, Since society has always been in a state of flux, why is there such urgency to address these changes now? And why must schools be so involved?

NASBE's Study Group on Confronting Social Issues found a number of answers to these questions:

- **Other traditional social institutions have not been able to provide the support that they have in the past.** Throughout the country's history, there have been a number of institutions that have absorbed the shocks associated with massive social change, including the family, the church, and the community. Today, however, these institutions are facing their own challenges, which combined with or as part of broader social changes, have impaired their ability to adapt to changing social needs. Because schools are often the hub of

Children at Risk

The changing context of society and the evolving culture of children and teenagers provide both opportunities and challenges. Some of these conditions may put youth at more risk for adverse behavior. For example:

- Children without adult supervision are at significantly greater risk of truancy, stress, isolation, alienation, receiving poor grades, and risk-taking behavior, such as substance abuse.
- Children who grow up poor are more likely to become teenage parents, high school drop-outs, and unemployed adults.
- Children from single-parent households can be more vulnerable simply because there is less likelihood of immediate adult back-up to reinforce discipline, provide a role model, or simply share the burden of responsibility.
- There is evidence that the extensive depiction of violence in the media can both model and legitimize aggressive behavior by children and youth.
- Children without adequate nutrition and access to health care are more likely to miss school, or if they attend school, to have a less meaningful and productive school experience.
- Children that experience constant name-calling; racial and ethnic intolerance; low social status; and sexual and other forms of harassment based on looking, behaving, and thinking differently from their peers are likely to disengage from school, experience academic failure, suffer from depression, or engage in behaviors that are harmful to themselves and to others.
- Children without a strong family, school, or community bond are more likely to fall prey to influences that undermine their sense of self, purpose, and hope for the future.

We also know that children burdened with a number of risk factors are more vulnerable. The Annie E. Casey Foundation tracks the incidence of selected risk factors, including absence of a parent, parent educational level less than high school diploma, family income below the poverty level, parents(s) without steady employment, family on welfare assistance, and absence of health insurance coverage. The Foundation's *Kids Count Book 1999* found that in 1997, over half of the 73.6 million children under 18 years old come from families with at least one variable characterizing risk, and over one-fifth of the children experienced three or more risk factors. They estimate the chances of failure—i.e., not graduating from high school, becoming an unwed teenage parent, etc.—become extremely high for children living with four or more risk factors. Over 9 million children, or about 13 percent of all children, had crossed this risk-factor threshold.

The study group believes it is important to note that despite unprecedented economic prosperity, every year millions of children and adolescents continue to fall through the cracks, as evidenced by such statistics as the following:

- School drop-out rates. The annual rate is still at 10 percent nationally.
- Teenage birth rates. While there have been slight improvements in recent years, the U.S. teen birth rate is still more than double the rate of the next highest developed countries (the United Kingdom and Canada) and six times higher than countries such as Germany and Sweden.
- Rates of teenage mortality due to accident, homicides, and suicides. These figures have basically remained unchanged from 1985 to 1996. But while the number of deaths due to accidents declined during that period, the number of homicides nearly doubled to 2,924 in 1996, with another 1,817 people aged 15-19 committing suicide during that year.

the community and because by their very nature they focus on caring for children, schools are ideally situated to take a leadership role in coordinating efforts to improve the life chances of young people.

- **Changes in the job market necessitate a highly skilled, well-trained work force.** As technology and the information age continue to have a pervasive effect on the workplace, the American economy demands employees that are ever more highly trained. Schools must adapt in order to continue to provide well-educated students to fill those jobs, students who are prepared to continue to learn new skills and concepts throughout their lives. Should schools fail in this mission, the job market will not only lack qualified candidates, but the nation as a whole will be forced to address the issue of millions of low-skilled workers.

- **Recent research confirms the link between student achievement and social health.** Over the past few years, a number of studies have begun to definitively document what people had always suspected: that if a child is troubled, hungry, abused, or scared, his or her chances for academic success diminish. Further, research examining a host of different social ills has begun to converge around a set of *preventable* causes of these problems, which lends more weight to the belief that we must do what we can to prevent future suffering. Given this inextricable link between physical and emotional well-being and academic achievement, schools have a vital interest in ensuring that all children's needs—both educational and beyond—are met.

The truth is, schools have always been involved in helping children and teenagers to grow both socially and academically. Whether it is a caring, observant teacher who notices that something is amiss with one of his students, a coach who sees that one of her athletes has abruptly lost all interest in competing, or a school nurse dealing with a student who has suddenly lost or gained excessive weight, countless individual educators, sometimes with the support of a state or district program, have taken the extra time to try to resolve personal issues that are impeding students' performance. The vast majority of teachers recognize that addressing students' non-academic needs is a necessary step in providing children with the best chance for high levels of achievement both in academics and life.

The study group believes that what is missing, however, is a **unifying vision of the school role in addressing the range of students' needs that affect learning**, because all too often the individual acts of educators—along with disparate, piecemeal, or even overlapping programs—are simply not getting the job done, especially in this time of tremendous social change. While individual teachers may notice a troubled child, if the visionary policies—from the statehouse to the schoolhouse—are not in place to facilitate educators' reaching out to those students who need help, children will continue to fall through the cracks. These children will not learn to their full potential; and too often, when the time comes when they should graduate, they will not be ready for a productive adulthood.

Amid all the other changes impacting society, education, too, has been undergoing a transformation. The 1990s has been the decade of the standards movement. Across the country, states and districts have been developing and raising academic standards and setting goals to ensure that all students will meet these standards. The study group enthusiastically supports these efforts. Despite this focus on academic standards, however, the study group believes that states may be setting themselves up for failure—that too many students will not achieve to the levels that have been set—unless educators think broadly about doing what it will take, academically and beyond, to meet our goals. It is this broad vision for success that is presented in the remainder of this report.

Chapter 2
Reframing How We View the Role of Schools

Schools have often complained of being held responsible for too many missions for too diverse a student population. Besides the obvious academic charge, schools are often considered the primary instrument of socialization, good citizenship, and preparation for the workplace. Many consider public education the key to a healthy democracy, providing all citizens and newcomers with the tools to fulfill the American dream. Some view these missions as a laundry list of "things to do," and they check off the items on that list by adding a program here or an assembly there. It is no wonder that schools are more than reluctant to take up the burden of society's problems or that teachers complain that they are not trained or paid as social service and health workers.

However, schools should change the way they view their role and how that influences what they do.

Adopting a Holistic Approach to Children and Youth

Recent research and analyses highlight a broader view of how to address the negative ways society influences the behavior of children and youth. Such studies help separate the symptoms from the causes of risky behaviors, as well as provide a better understanding of the vulnerabilities of children at different stages in their development. Over the past decade, a number of longitudinal studies have shown how seemingly unrelated early experiences can influence later behavior. There is also greater use of interdisciplinary research that has brought new perspectives to the examination of old problems. For example, the public health model, originally developed as an approach to disease prevention, is now being applied to such social issues as violence prevention (see box on page 14). The result has been to widen our understanding of both the causes and the responses to many of these social issues and to reframe the role of schools operating alone and in coordination with each other.

A review of this research points to three main themes that have implications for schools:

- **A child's cognitive development is linked with his or her social, physical, and emotional development.** While schools identify themselves as places to learn and achieve academically, to develop good citizenship habits, and to acquire marketable skills, success in these missions is dependent upon the students' overall development. Addressing the developmental needs of students is not a diversion from the school's primary focus on academics. Creating a school environment that supports the whole student is often already intrinsic to the school; this can be seen, for example, in the ways in which classes are organized and taught. Educators often already understand that social skills, or the ability to form relationships, are related to learning and cognitive capacity; that the health status of children is linked to academic achievement, as well as student behavior and attitudes toward school; and that learning how to handle emotions affects analytical capacity. Schools must

Applying the Public Health Model to Social Problems

Although we associate the public health approach with immunizations or sanitary food and water supplies, the public health model is really a community-based approach that provides a framework for analyzing a situation and developing prevention strategies. In the past it has been applied to a wide range of problems that have public health implications, such as lead poisoning, smoking, and motor vehicle injuries. In all of these instances, the preventive strategies have reached beyond the medical world to address the problem, attempting to modify the behavior of individuals, families, and society itself. In fact, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that most of the 30-year gain in the average life expectancy of Americans during this century is attributable to public health programs rather than improvements in medical care (Elliott et al., 1998).

The elements of the public health model include:

- **A community-based approach.** The model identifies problems and develops solutions across population groups. Rather than the patient-by-patient approach of the family doctor, the public health model builds coalitions and implements collaborative responses based in community organizations.

- **Problem identification through surveillance.** Similar to the treatment of a disease, the model uses data collection to identify the nature of the problem, including who it affects, when, where, and how, and what the trends are over time.

- **Analyses of causes.** The next step is to identify the causes of the problem. Of particular interest are the risk factors and protective factors associated with the prevalence and incidence of the problem.

- **Development and tests of interventions.** Based on the analyses it is possible to start designing and monitoring strategies for prevention. These are keyed to the particular groups affected and take into account what strategies work best, under what circumstances, and at what cost.

- **Implementation of prevention strategies.** The model ultimately becomes an outreach program. Through public education, demonstration programs, and access to support services, the strategies are implemented at the community level.

In the past few years, educators have begun applying the public health model to the issue of violence prevention. In regards to bullying, for example, the National Association of School Psychologists estimates that 160,000 children stay home from school every day because they fear they will be bullied (Vail, 1999). The Pittsburgh Youth Violence Study investigated the developmental pathway of violence by youth and found bullying to be an entry-level form of minor aggression in the early years that can progress to physical fighting and then to more serious instances of violence as children get older. In addition, bullying can become normalized. If the behavior is not stopped in school or in other structured settings, bystanders begin to believe it is acceptable and take part in the bullying activity. Interventions such as curricula and programs are beginning to be developed, and there is a realization that administrators and teachers need a structured way to deal with bullying that makes it clear that such intimidation is unacceptable behavior (Elliott et al., 1998). The Maine Project Against Bullying has set up a website listing the anti-bullying programs and curricula available for the early elementary school years at http://lincoln.midcoast.com/~wps/against/bullying.html.

now take this knowledge one step further and adopt strategies that build on these linkages. Educators can ask themselves, for example, does my school's environment foster learning to work with others or a sense of self-esteem through the encouragement and reward of meeting challenges?

- **Schools are an important part of a child's environment.** Children are impacted by their environment, and the adults they become are shaped by the aggregate experiences of their daily lives. Families remain the most important influence as a child grows up, but schools do play a role as well. We tend to think in terms of students and others bringing the problems of the outside environment—such as drugs, gangs, or violence—into the school. We ignore the fact that the school *itself* is an environment that, for at least part of the day, can offer protective supports. For example, findings based on the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health indicate that the school context has a limited but consistent influence on adolescent emotional health and that a sense of connectedness with the school is one protective factor against risk behaviors (Resnick et al., 1997). Other studies have explored how differing characteristics of schools are associated with student outcomes and behavior. One analysis indicated that schools with a strong academic mission, clear non-violent and pro-social behavioral norms, consistent and fair rule enforcement, and a climate of emotional support have been able to reduce the amount of disorder within their respective schools.

- **While schools may provide students some protective support, addressing the root causes of societal issues requires a collaborative response.** Only through collaboration can the public and private sectors accumulate sufficient resources and expertise to address the causes and effects of profound social issues in a more permanent way. To this end, while schools cannot do it alone, they can align their efforts within such cooperative frameworks. In fact, schools are often viewed as the key participant in such collaborations because the school is a central institution in the local community and the convening place for children and youth.

Over the last decade there has been an increase in cooperative approaches to serving children and youth. Currently, 30 states have established collaborative governing bodies that coordinate across state agencies or with local and private organizations. Several states now have "Children's Cabinets" that usually include the education, social services, health services, and related agencies. One goal is to provide complementary services, rather than having each agency deal with only one aspect of their client's needs.

In recent years, the justice system has been particularly active in advocating collaborative strategies that involve schools. The U.S. Justice Department, for example, contracted for a study on the cost-effectiveness of various crime prevention measures. The study concluded that providing youth with incentives for high school graduation was a much more effective investment toward reducing crime than the deterrent threat of the three-strike program. A number of organizations representing the police, sheriffs, and district attorneys have endorsed an anti-crime campaign that calls for protection against child abuse, quality early childhood education, adequate health care, effective schools and after-school programs, and school-to-work training or access to college (Greenwood et al., 1996).

Chapter 3
What Are the Developmental Needs of Children and Youth?

Recent studies underscore the need for educators to be aware of the developmental needs of children and youth. Research on the development of the brain during early childhood and on the prevention of risky behaviors during youth provide compelling evidence that learning is tied to overall development. At the same time, the surrounding environment—families, schools, communities, and society—influences the strategies children and youth employ to make the transition to adulthood.

Early Childhood Brain Development

Although genetics, relationships, health, and nutrition are factors, recent research indicates that environment has an important influence on the development of the brain. Children are born with a vast potential for learning. Children's experiences with the world around them stimulate neurons to grow billions of connections, or synapses, for use in sensing, thinking, and taking action. Repeated stimulation strengthens and refines connections, while disuse results in a withering of capacity.

The research findings include the following:

- **Brain development is affected by the prenatal environment.** Early in a pregnancy, the brain cells of the fetus are vulnerable to exposure to alcohol, drugs, and infection.

- **The greatest period of growth occurs during the first three years of life and has a lasting impact on how the brain is wired.** By age three the brain is twice as active as that of an adult. This time period represents an extraordinary opportunity for increased learning, and a child's experiences during this time can have enduring effects. Secure relationships with parents or care-givers and the experiences they provide are important.

- **The preschool and primary grades present a unique window of opportunity to influence learning and the basic foundation for later development.** Ages three to ten are crucial as children become more proficient in communication as well as develop the capability to regulate their behavior and resolve conflicts. Not only do children increase their store of knowledge, but they develop greater facility in intellectual problem-solving and abstract thinking. During these years, connections that have not been sufficiently reinforced are eliminated.

- **Stressful environments can adversely affect brain development and learning.** Stress precipitates a biological reaction (an increase in stress hormones and cortisol levels) that becomes toxic to neurons and delays development. Children raised in sensitive, responsive relationships at home or at day care and who have their needs met, feel valued, and have secure attachments to primary adult figures are better able to regulate stress levels.

- **While brain development is most rapid during childhood, learning is**

lifelong. Later experiences can make at least some compensation for early deprivations in a child's environment.

Researchers are still exploring these findings and how they can best be applied to education. The data to date contribute to our understanding that all children can learn and that they learn in different ways. They also underscore the importance of the environment that influences the development of the brain and a child's behavior. (For additional information on the latest brain research, see Appendix B.)

The Developmental Needs of Children and Youth

Children must progress through developmental tasks as they move to adolescence and then adulthood. Adolescence in particular has been described as the training ground for adulthood. Children and youth experiment with behaviors, attitudes, and activities as they interact with their environment to address these tasks.

A representative listing of what psychologists identify as developmental needs can be found in the youth development model devised by Karen Pittman and Michelle Cahill (1992). All children—indeed all humans—need the following:

Connection

- **Sense of safety and structure.** Security is vital to well-being. When children feel safe, they can relax and start exploring the world around them.
- **Sense of closeness.** Children need stable, positive relationships with at least a parent or other adult figure. Through such closeness they learn to trust, feel, and respond.
- **Sense of belonging, of group membership.** When children lack bonding, whether to family, school, or community, there is an increased risk of alienation.

Confidence

- **Sense of self-worth.** Children need a sense of affirmation and evidence that they are valued.
- **Sense of independence and control over one's life.** Children need to be taken seriously as individuals and to believe that they have the opportunity to succeed.

Character

- **Sense of competence.** Children who develop a track record of success are more likely to develop confidence in their ability to meet challenges.
- **Sense of self-awareness.** Development of an identity is an important resource that contributes to the strength and resilience of the individual.

While all of these needs are important through childhood and adolescence, children and youth progress through stages in which certain tasks associated with these needs are particularly salient and serve as the stepping stone to addressing the next task. For pre-school children, it is the development of self-control; for grade school children, it is the development of interpersonal skills; for early adolescents, it is the development of a stable peer group; and for high schoolers, it is the formation and consolidation of an identity. Because children develop these capacities in the context of the environment around them, it is important that they be provided with developmentally appropriate supports.

Youth who successfully negotiate these stages of development will be well-equipped to become successful adults. In fact, the youth development model identifies five sets of competencies needed to make the transition to adulthood. These include physical, social, cognitive, and vocational skills, as well as involved citizenship (see box on page 18).

Basic Needs and Competencies Outlined in the Youth Development Model

Basic Needs

- **Sense of Connectedness.** Recognition of safety, belonging, structure, and closeness within relationships and groups.
- **Sense of Confidence.** Self-worth, ability to contribute, and independence and control over one's life.
- **Sense of Character.** Competence, mastery, self-awareness, respect for self/others/community.

Competencies

- **Health/Physical Competence.** Good current health status, plus evidence of appropriate knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that will ensure future health (e.g., good diet/nutrition practices).
- **Personal/Social Competence.** Intrapersonal skills (ability to understand personal emotions and have self-discipline); interpersonal skills (ability to work with others and develop personal relationships and friendships through communication, cooperation, empathizing, and negotiating); coping skills (ability to adapt, be flexible, and assume responsibility); and judgment skills (ability to plan, evaluate, make decisions, and solve problems).
- **Cognitive/Creative Competence.** Broad base of knowledge; ability to appreciate and participate in creative expression; good oral and written skills; problem-solving and analytical skills; an ability to learn; and an interest in learning and achieving.
- **Vocational Competence.** Broad understanding and awareness of vocational options and of steps needed to act on future choices; adequate preparation for future career; and understanding of the value and function of work and leisure.
- **Citizenship (Ethics and Participation) Competence.** Understanding the history and values of one's nation and community and the desire to be involved in efforts that contribute to the nation and community.

Source: K.J. Pittman and M. Cahill. (1992). *Pushing the Boundaries of Education: The Implications of a Youth Development Approach to Education Policies, Structures, and Collaborations.* Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

Prevention of Risky Behaviors

The competencies promoted in the youth development model represent the elements that help to ensure a child's successful transition to adulthood; understandably, they are more difficult to attain without positive supports. Absent a supportive environment, youth may engage in risky behaviors in order to meet their needs. Joining a gang, for instance, can provide a teenager with safety, structure, strong social relationships, a sense of belonging, the opportunity to develop street skills, and rewards for competence.

Over the past two decades, researchers have conducted many studies centered on preventing risky behaviors. Studies examining young people's substance and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, or juvenile delinquency were conducted separately, but their findings began to converge around similar symptoms—and importantly—similar solutions. The studies identified a common set of factors that help protect youth from choosing to engage in risky behavior, regardless of the specific activity, and furthermore stressed the importance of addressing developmental needs to ensure healthy and well-adjusted children and youth.

One important observation that has grown out of such studies is the power of definition: many researchers suggest that instead of thinking about youth in terms of their potential risks for failure, children and youth should be viewed as having strengths that can be protected and expanded. These researchers argue that young people approach their tasks with great potential and that they can demonstrate resiliency, and ultimately success, in adverse circumstances. This capacity is developed over a long period that allows for some positive reinforcements at key junctures. Such an insight fosters a vision of building upon what is already working successfully and using that foundation to offer additional supports when needed.

Finally, research data and anecdotal evidence show that families, schools, and communities can effectively provide some protection for children and youth despite a high-risk environment. Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health found that social contexts do matter: when there is perceived caring and connectedness to families, schools, or the community, there is less likelihood of negative social and health outcomes (Resnick et al., 1997).

Using the Youth Development Model to Address the Problems of Teenage Pregnancy

In common with other risky behaviors, such as substance abuse or juvenile delinquency, a student's experience with school can be associated with risk for early pregnancy. Teenagers who become parents tend to have lower grade-point averages, be absent from school more often, have more difficulties with school work, and have lower expectations for their futures. Other aspects of the school environment also play a role. Studies show that youth who can identify with one trusted adult at school are less likely to engage in sexual intercourse and are more likely to use contraception if they do have sex. One study found that African-Americans who were identified as "low achievers" by two of their eighth-grade teachers were more likely than other students to become pregnant during adolescence, regardless of how they actually performed when measured on standardized tests, grade-point averages, or identified ability groups. Conversely, teenage girls who are more likely to abstain from risky sexual activity are academically successful; feel a sense of connection to home, school, and community; and have high hopes for the future.

Schools have addressed teenage pregnancy and its prevention in various ways over the last 30 years. Decades ago, pregnancy was the major reason for girls to drop out of school, and dropping out was actually encouraged. Schools eventually began addressing teen pregnancy prevention through family life education and sexuality education courses. While sexuality education is an important piece of teen pregnancy prevention, the current research suggests that a multi-faceted approach that builds on the competencies outlined in the youth development model is more promising. Components of such an approach include supporting the mastery of academic skills, fostering hope for the future, encouraging a sense of belonging, and ensuring the availability of primary health care.

A 1998 forum of members from state and local boards of education featured a comprehensive framework for the education community's involvement in teen pregnancy prevention. Sponsored by NASBE and the National School Boards Association, the forum was titled, *What Can We Do to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Promote Student Achievement?* Based on the youth development model, attendees identified a number of steps the education community could take in order to build the necessary competencies that simultaneously reduce adolescent parenthood and promote student achievement. They identified state and local resources and programs that could be applied to each of four interdependent categories:

- enhancing the academic success of all youth;
- enhancing the health literacy and the health status of all youth;
- enhancing the career skills and aspirations of all youth; and,
- enhancing supports for the success of all youth.

The result was to broaden policymakers' vision: participants realized that addressing the prevention of teenage pregnancy was intrinsic to the education community's primary mission of building academic and career skills, and really no different than their mission for all students. Second, the exercise provided a literal view of a more comprehensive approach to supporting student success. Participants became aware of the resources available across the different levels and agencies of government and the private sector. And finally, the approach provided a useful template that education policymakers could use to identify both unmet needs and appropriate courses of action.

Chapter 4
What Schools Can Do

Schools, as part of their primary mission, can help protect students from harmful societal influences. By creating a learning environment that supports students and their developmental needs, schools actually enhance students' academic engagement and achievement. Research on preventing risky behaviors highlights the interdependence of the school context and student achievement. Findings include:

- **Schools that have high expectations for all students enhance the academic success of all students.** Even marginal students will stay if they have experienced success in school and find it relevant to their future job or career.

- **Schools that provide students with a safe and orderly environment are more likely to promote academic success.** Students need a clear set of expectations and rules governing behavior and consistent, fair enforcement of those rules.

- **A high level of bonding or identification with the school promotes both students staying in school and academic achievement.** Schools need to provide an array of event opportunities that promote active participation and a sense of identification with the school. Activities should encompass a range of student skill levels, and students' successful acquisition of skills should be reinforced through recognition and reward.

- **Schools can also increase the level of bonding through the level of caring and support.** For a resilient student, for example, the perceived caring of a special teacher can assist in the development of academic skills as well as provide a model for personal identification.

These points support the conclusion that the school's role in helping students deal with societal issues really begins with the school being effective in its own mission.

Promoting a Positive Learning Environment

Schools can review their entire environment from what goes on in the hallways to how the curriculum is taught to see whether the school supports students' need for connectedness, confidence, and character-building. Specific considerations include the following:

- **Organization of the school.** How schools organize the day, assign students, and set out discipline policies impacts the school environment. How large a class is and what kind of opportunities students have to interact with teachers and other students influences students' perception of schools. Research has shown that the characteristics of schools associated with high delinquency rates include large school size, lack of structure, inconsistent treatment by administrators and teachers, and ability grouping and negative labeling.

- **Classroom management and instruction.** Innovative instructional strategies, such as proactive classroom management and interactive teaching, can promote greater bonding of students to the school and increase achievement. Research on

cooperative learning shows it not only advances student achievement but enforces students' feelings of altruism and sense that they can succeed.

- **Curriculum.** The curriculum needs to be appropriate to the skill levels of the child and promote student engagement in learning. Experiential approaches, for example, have proven effective at upgrading school performance and preventing problem behaviors. One such approach is community service learning, which encourages solving problems collaboratively, taking responsibility, working with others for a positive outcome, and producing a tangible product as evidence of accomplishment. Likewise, a strong school-to-work program can serve as an effective drop-out prevention program by helping students see how doing well at school is relevant to a future job or career.

  An appropriate civics curriculum also contributes to the competencies youth need to acquire. In an effective course, student outcomes include an understanding of democratic values and the common good, as well as the higher level thinking and social process skills needed to evaluate information, communicate effectively, and work in cooperative endeavors.

  Character education has been shown to have a positive relationship with high standards of academic responsibility. As the nation has become more diverse, educators must convey appreciation of different traditions. However, there is consensus that we share a common set of core values, including honesty, trustworthiness, respect for self and others, responsibility, fairness, compassion, and citizenship. For schools the challenge is to go beyond a formal curriculum and make these values pervasive to the daily life of the school.

- **Individualized supports.** Provision of additional supports, such as tutoring and counseling, can help students keep up with their studies and provide a sense of caring. Research in drop-out prevention identifies a variety of strategies that are needed to address the problem, including student assistance services for substance abuse, teen pregnancy and young parenthood, suicide prevention, and other mental and physical health issues.

There is a substantial knowledge base on the provision of supportive environments for academic achievement and other needed competencies. However, little exists that describes and measures what the ideal supportive school looks like. Just as states hold schools accountable for student performance, states need to provide templates by which schools can evaluate how well they meet student needs.

Furthermore, in order to promote wider use of many of these strategies, educators need to be trained on their use. This may be especially true of secondary school faculty who may not be as cognizant of youth development issues or the variety of teaching strategies available to improve student engagement and performance. All teachers need to be aware of changing demographics and whether they require new approaches or training for more appropriate skills. Finally, teachers need to be able to recognize students in crisis and refer them to the appropriate person or agency.

Examples of Promising Strategies

The Potential of Early Childhood Education

The findings on child development, combined with research on early childhood interventions, highlight the opportunities for establishing a foundation that can help protect students as they get older. The combination of parenting programs, high-quality day care, and appropriate school curricula for children aged 4-8 can promote key literacy and communication skills and assure that students leave the fourth grade proficient in reading, writing, mathematics, and science.

While schools can encourage readiness-to-learn prior to a child entering kindergarten, their most direct influence is on the primary grades. Schools increasingly provide pre-kindergarten instruction, especially for children at risk. Whole school reform programs such as *Success for All* increasingly incorporate pre-kindergarten as part of their curriculum. As we will see in the next chapter, comprehensive approaches that link schools with outside services often include quality day care and parenting programs.

Both child development theory and research on successful practices identify six features of high-quality early care and education programs: high staff-child ratios; small group sizes; adequate staff education and training; low staff turnover; curriculum emphasizing child-initiated, active learning; and parent involvement.

Some of the most significant research on the effectiveness of quality day care on children's future success is the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project for pre-school 3- and 4-year-olds considered at risk. When compared with control groups attending child care, those attending the Perry program showed important short-term and long-term advantages. Academic performance remained significantly higher than the control groups through age 14. There was less likelihood of special education referrals. By age 27, lasting differences were evident as the Perry attendees were more likely to be employed and paid more, and less likely to be on welfare or to be involved in criminal activity. Based on the results, several studies calculated the overall savings to the government of $25,000 or more per child (Sweinhart and Weikart, 1997).

The Effects of Reducing Class Size

The effects of reducing class size on student performance and related indicators is sensitive to the definition of small class size and the circumstances of the research. There is consensus that class size reduction in the early grades of kindergarten through third leads to higher student achievement. From fourth grade on, there is little evidence that size affects academic performance, although significant effects are found when the class size is reduced below 20, especially when compared to the performance of very large classes. Most studies indicate that the effects of class reduction are larger for disadvantaged and minority students.

Reduction in class size has other benefits. Students, teachers, and parents all report that smaller class sizes increase the quality of classroom activity. Researchers suggest that the reduction in size results in less distraction and more instructional time, and students are also more likely to develop better relationships with their teacher and classmates. Finally, small classes in the early grades may prove to help prevent future problems by helping beginning students become engaged in learning activities and by providing opportunities for additional attention should students begin to fall behind.

The most compelling study of class size reduction is Project STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio), a multi-year study by the state of Tennessee in which kindergarten and primary-aged children were randomly assigned to one of three classroom situations: a small class of 13-17 students, a large class of 22-25 students with an aide, or a large class without an aide. Children were returned to their regular, larger class assignments after they completed third grade. The smaller classes produced substantial improvement, and students in smaller classes outperformed the other two groups academically. Minority and inner city children benefitted to an even greater extent than non-minority students, particularly in reading. In follow-up studies to measure the lasting benefits of the experiment, students from smaller classes retained their advantage, staying 6 to 12 months ahead of their counterparts in the larger classes during grades 4, 6, and 8 in math, reading, and science. Even at the end of 12th grade, students in the small classes in the primary years tended to drop out less frequently, to take more challenging courses, and to be more inclined to go on to college than their counterparts in larger primary classes (Mosteller, 1995).

Public Support for Learning Initiatives

A series of recent polls demonstrates that there is widespread public support for making changes in the learning environment.

Reducing class size has been a frequent topic of public discussion, and recent polls show that parents and even non-parents consider it a major factor in judging schools.

- The 1999 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools found that the public considered class size an important factor (75 percent saw it as very important, and 19 percent as fairly important) in choosing a public school for a child (Rose and Gallup, 1999).

- In the 1999 NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Education Survey, 73 percent of all respondents (and 79 percent of all parents responding) indicated they thought small classes for elementary school students make a difference in student achievement. Sixty-two percent said it made a great deal of difference for high school students. In the same poll, 86 percent of the respondents favored reducing class sizes to improve their public schools, even though "that could cost more money and require additional tax dollars"; 69 percent favored such action "strongly" (National Public Radio, 1999).

- In a July 1998 Gallup Poll for *USA Today* and CNN, 80 percent favored Congress "providing funds to be used to reduce class size in grades one, two, and three" (Public Agenda, 1998).

School size does not receive much attention in the press, but the 1999 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll did find that a majority considered school size important in choosing a local school (46 percent said it was "very important," while 33 percent rated it "fairly important").

Early childhood education is also showing up more frequently in the polls. In April 1998, the Public Agenda conducted a survey of African-American and non-Hispanic white parents to determine their views on ways to help failing schools and minority students. Eighty-five to ninety percent of both races agreed that expanding pre-school programs would be an "excellent" or "good" way to improve education (Public Agenda, 1998).

Finally, the polls show support for values associated with **civics** and **character education**. The same Public Agenda poll of African-American and white parents found that over four-fifths of the respondents felt it is "absolutely essential" to teach values such as honesty and respect. This is reinforced by the 1999 Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup poll in which 90 percent or more of respondents favored schools teaching honesty, democracy, acceptance of people of different races and ethnic backgrounds, caring for friends and family members, moral courage, and patriotism or love of country.

School Size Makes a Difference

The research on the benefits of smaller schools is compelling. In a review of 69 studies of school size, Kathleen Cotton of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory reported that small schools were held to be superior to large schools on most measures and equal to them on the rest. This was true regardless of grade level, student ability, or setting (Cotton, 1996).

The research consistently found that student achievement in small schools is at least equal to and often higher than achievement in large schools. This finding is reinforced by the fact that students in small schools have more positive attitudes, higher attendance rates, lower drop-out rates, and fewer behavior problems. They have a much greater sense of belonging and are more likely to participate in school activities.

Researchers believe these findings reflect several factors. People come to know and care about one another more in smaller settings. Also, there is greater parent involvement in small schools and a more positive attitude on the part of the administration and staff. Lastly, it is easier to implement instructional changes in a small school, a circumstance that results in small schools being more likely to use reform methods such as team teaching, experiential learning, and performance assessments.

The research also questions the arguments made in support of large schools. The perceived cost-effectiveness of operating larger schools is not necessarily a reality. Researchers found a good deal of variation in the relationship between cost and size. One study suggested a U-shaped mathematical relationship between size and average per-pupil costs, where costs decline up to a point as enrollment increases but then rise with further school growth. Other research indicates that the large staff and infrastructure needed to manage and control large numbers of students explains why such schools become more expensive.

Proponents of large schools also argue that small schools cannot provide the same variety and depth of curriculum choices. However, a substantial body of research suggests that there is no reliable relationship between school size and curriculum quality. There is evidence that the expanded curriculum offered in larger schools tends to be introductory courses for non-core subjects rather than higher-level courses in the core academic areas. Moreover, only a small percentage of students actually take the extra courses. Finally, a number of studies have found that small schools do as well as or better than large schools in preparing students for college entrance and success.

Alternatively, using a school-within-a-school approach might mitigate the effects of large schools. There is limited research, but findings indicate that when implemented correctly, students in these self-contained smaller entities will benefit in terms of academic achievement, social behavior, attendance, and student-teacher relations.

Gains in North Carolina and Texas

Between 1990 and 1997, North Carolina and Texas posted the largest gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other indicators of education progress tracked by the National Education Goals Panel. Not only was the size of the score gains remarkable in comparison to those of other states, but there also was evidence that many disadvantaged students made more rapid improvement than their more advantaged counterparts. To find out why, the Goals Panel commissioned Dr. David Grissmer to analyze the reforms in each of the states and to identify the factors that accounted for such significant increases in achievement.

Dr. Grissmer's study concluded that both North Carolina and Texas had enacted similar policies that changed the organizational environment and incentive structure of their state education systems (Grissmer and Flanagan, 1998). Almost as important as the policies themselves was the way in which the two states developed, implemented, and sustained the reforms over the period of a decade. Strong leadership from the business community played a pivotal role, first by helping to develop a strategic plan, then by brokering the necessary compromises in the face of early opposition from key education stakeholders, and finally by promoting implementation of the reform agenda over the long haul. Despite changes in party and office, political leadership helped sustain the momentum by keeping the focus on education. These leaders built on previous reforms, maintaining some continuity in the effort instead of making major shifts to new agendas. Ultimately both states succeeded in building an infrastructure in both the public and private sectors to support a process of continual improvement in education.

Key policies included:

- **Statewide standards by grade for clear teaching objectives.** In addition to providing clear standards detailing what students should know and be able to do, the two states put effort into aligning those standards to the curriculum and textbooks.

- **Holding all students to the same standards.** Although students with significant disabilities were not held to the state academic standards, everyone else was. In Texas, performance targets based on the state standards were set for each subgroup (defined by the race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status) of the student population.

- **Statewide assessments closely aligned with academic standards.** Both states developed new statewide assessment tests to reflect the standards in each grade.

- **Accountability systems with consequences for results.** Both states used the state assessment tests to rate schools, providing financial rewards to improving schools. The states also retained the authority to remove principals and to disenfranchise school districts demonstrating sustained levels of poor performance.

- **Increasing local control and flexibility for administrators and teachers.** Both states provided local schools and districts greater flexibility in responding to the new standards by providing greater local control over how funds were budgeted and repealing overly restrictive laws.

- **Computerized feedback systems and data for continuous improvement.** Both states set up the infrastructure necessary to provide timely, accessible data on performance.

- **Targeting resources to schools with more disadvantaged students.** The study found the perception that resources were distributed equitably may have been the key to gaining acceptance and continuing support for applying the same standards and accountability systems across all districts and schools.

Chapter 5
Schools Working with Others

What schools do on their own is important in helping students deal with social issues, but schools become even more effective when they join with other organizations. A common conclusion throughout the literature pertaining to children and risk is that addressing the problem, and more importantly, preventing the risk, requires a coordinated, comprehensive effort across a number of initiatives involving families, schools, and communities. Increasingly, schools are involved in a variety of collaborative arrangements that broaden the kinds of assistance offered and the way it is delivered to children at home, at school, and in the community.

The Emergence of Collaborative Approaches

Over the last decade, there has been an explosion of school-community approaches aimed at improving schools, strengthening neighborhoods, and addressing the problems of children and youth. Much of this has been accomplished as a result of four separate movements: school reform, youth development, community economic development, and the reform of health and social services delivery. Initiated by public and private organizations at both the local and state levels, state policymakers and agencies increasingly are taking a lead role in coordinating outreach efforts. Over 30 states have some form of a collaborative governing structure at the cabinet level. Yet the chief characteristic of these approaches is that they are tailored to the circumstances of the school and community.

These collaborations provide an array of activities and services. Most are "school-linked," defined in a recent survey as "the coordinated linking of school and community resources to support the needs of school-aged children and their families" (School Mental Health Project, 1999). School-linked resources usually include the various educational, health, and social services but can also include areas like job training, housing, and juvenile probation services. They can extend what goes on in the school to such activities as after-school, early childhood, parenting, and mentoring programs. The type of collaboration can include agreements among state agencies, task forces, or mandates; formal or informal agreements with state or local government agencies; in-kind arrangements with local public and private organizations; and formal and informal referral networks. The community and private sector participants range from the business community to service agencies and clubs (such as the Red Cross or Lions), and from the faith community to a local group like Neighborhood Watch.

With such a variety of approaches and partners, it is difficult to document the effects of these collaborative efforts on schools. What evaluation exists suggests that school-community initiatives can make a difference in the lives of participating children and families. Measures such as student attendance, behavior referrals, and drop-out rates also improved. Many of these collaborations are beginning to establish results-based accountability measures.

The Key Role of Schools

Although part of a much larger effort, schools often become the focus of cooperative efforts

because they already are the central location for children. Schools are also one of the most important, visible organizations in the community. In extremely troubled neighborhoods, the school may be the only functioning community organization. Finally, because behavior and performance in school provide the earliest warning signs that children or youth are having trouble, schools are a good place to identify needs early.

Schools benefit from a number of advantages for playing such a central role. They not only access additional resources and expertise for the students and school, but they get help in expanding the protective support that schools offer students. For example, partner organizations can extend the school day through after-school and weekend programs or provide additional supports to families. And this more holistic approach to addressing the needs of children and families helps the school in its academic mission by identifying and removing barriers to learning. Such arrangements, for instance, can provide the parental education and quality day care that increases children's readiness-to-learn.

Schools often serve as the home base for such efforts, whether they primarily issue referrals for outside services or whether the services themselves are based at the school. While some of these arrangements are informal and limited, the trend is toward a more comprehensive configuration of assistance. This new institutional arrangement is known as a full-service community school, and it has the dual objective of delivering quality education and needed health and social services. A number of education, youth development, human services, and community development groups have joined together to promote this vision through organizations like the Coalition for Community Schools.

Challenges to the School

Participation in collaborative arrangements challenges schools to not only work in different ways with other organizations but also to make changes in the school itself. This is especially true in the full-service community school model, when the collaborative services often are based in the school itself. Some issues include:

- **Shared vision.** Creating a shared vision and focus is key to a successful collaboration. This can be hard to reconcile with what is considered to be the primary mission of the school. Participating partners are viewed as outsiders and what they do as an add-on. In reviewing the lessons learned from Missouri's Caring Communities (see box on page 30), one of the biggest problems was keeping the different agencies focused on the program goals and not just their particular mission. It is important to establish common ground and to define the specific aims of the partnership before implementation.

- **Governance.** Most agreements need a lead member or at least a very clear delineation of each partner's areas of control. There can be conflicts over areas of governance and questions as to what extent partners become integrated into school site councils or faculty organizations.

- **Staffing services.** Bringing in partners to provide services can challenge existing staffing arrangements. Schools and partners may staff redundant jobs. Integrating duties across organizations or eliminating duplicate positions can raise questions of providing comparable salaries, maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information, or violating union agreements. A major lesson learned from past partnerships is the need for a coordinator based in the school. However, schools can have difficulty creating and funding this position, or even defining the employee's status in the overall personnel structure of the district.

- **Use of the school building.** Sharing the school with "outsiders" can raise issues of security, operating costs, and liability

coverage (see box on facing page). School personnel also worry whether "outsiders" will adhere to the school's policies on various issues such as discipline.

As such cooperative arrangements become more comprehensive and integrated across schools and service agencies, state policymakers will need to examine the implications of this new kind of institution. Questions and concerns to be addressed include: What is a school building? How does this change the staff positions within schools in terms of job description, training, evaluation, and compensation? How will full-service community schools be held accountable? How will they be funded?

Sharing School Space

The participation of schools in the range of partnerships, coalitions, and cooperative efforts can raise a number of turf and legal issues. Because schools are a central location for children and youth, many of the "outside" services and programs prefer to be located at the school. This can raise a number of concerns about the use of the school building.

- **Provision of space and security.** Many schools do not have the extra rooms available to give outsiders their own designated space. The result is that rooms get employed for multiple purposes based on scheduled use. School administrators and staff worry that the overlap will create opportunities to breach the zone of security around the school. They are concerned about the potential for theft or vandalism, or merely the inconvenience of coming in the following morning and finding all the desks and chairs switched around and the students' work moved.

- **Costs of operating the building.** Adding outside services for more hours or more days means increased costs for lighting, heating, cooling, custodial care, and other services.

- **Liability concerns associated with non-school employees using the school.** Outsiders' use of the school building and property can raise issues about the adequacy of the school's liability insurance. In addition, background checks are a routine requirement for school employment. School administrators may want to extend the practice to outsiders working with the students.

There are a number of ways these issues can be resolved. Outsiders can contribute toward operating expenses, agree to background checks, and negotiate guidelines governing the use of school space. However, the key to accommodating both the needs of the school and outsiders may be the extent to which the two perceive a mutual mission and positive benefits. For example, Dr. Larry Decker, an expert on community education at Florida State University, has found that school administrators increasingly see benefits that compensate for the added cost and logistical inconvenience of sharing school space. This is true when they perceive the arrangement results in increased public understanding of educational issues, helps build community support and involvement in the school, and contributes toward a learning environment where students succeed (NASBE, Community Use of School Buildings, 1998).

Missouri's Caring Communities

Caring Communities is Missouri's 1993 initiative to support the well-being of children and families in order to ensure success in school and in life. It is intended to bridge state and local—as well as public and private—efforts in the following ways:

- **Change the way services are governed** by having the local community stakeholders make decisions about priorities, strategies, and financing.
- **Change the way services are delivered** by integrating services across schools and agencies, using neighborhood and community networks of support, and being family-focused.
- **Change the way services are financed** through increased flexibility by pooling state and federal funds across agencies.
- **Increase accountability** by tying efforts at all levels to demonstrated improvement in six core results.

Caring Communities is described as both a top-down and bottom-up approach. At the state level, the entire effort is overseen by the Family Investment Trust, currently comprising the directors of seven state agencies and five civic and business leaders. In addition, the state has created a cross-agency structure to foster collaboration. The state role is to help local sites by providing financial and technical assistance, facilitating removal of bureaucratic barriers, sharing innovative ideas, and promoting broad participation. In 1995, for the first time in Missouri's history, five agencies presented a combined budget request to underwrite Caring Communities.

At the local level a community partnership brings together the local stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. The partnership oversees a number of school neighborhood sites directed by councils. Caring Communities councils determine the vision and the mission of the neighborhood program and identify challenges, resources, and options. To date, many, but not all, have created plans focusing on the school and school-linked services. The work of the councils is guided by the partnership, which then enters into agreements with state agencies. Councils are also assisted by coordinators who serve as liaisons from the state agencies.

Each site builds it plan around the same six core results. They include: parents working; healthy children and families; children safe in their families, and families safe in their communities; children prepared to enter school; children and youth succeeding in school; and youth ready to enter productive adulthood. The establishment of common results makes it easier to coordinate statewide efforts, to promote the sharing of successful activities, and to assure accountability in the state's overall efforts. The core results are keyed to a set of 18 benchmarks; baselines for the benchmarks are developed at the state, community, and neighborhood levels. The first formal state-level evaluation conducted in 1998 showed progress on a number of the benchmarks.

Chapter 6
Where to Find the Funds

While research shows how schools can change their own environment or work with other organizations to benefit student achievement and growth, implementing these strategies may require resources to support new staff positions, staff training, materials, and other operating costs. An examination of how community school programs are funded reveals a wide variety of possible sources, ranging across the public and private spectrum.

Schools Can Maximize Resources from a Number of Sources

There is evidence that ample funding exists for schools to address students' non-academic needs either alone or in cooperation with others. The challenge is that it often resides in a number of public and private funding categories. Putting the funds together for a particular program may run counter to traditional resource allotments.

Schools can access a number of resources beyond the traditional operating budget provided through the district.

- **Schools and school systems can apply for grants housed in the U.S. Department of Education and in other federal agencies as resources to expand services and program support.** For example, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which supports after-school activities, was funded at $200 million in FY 1999, and the Administration asked that it be increased to $600 million in FY 2000. Other sources include the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and programs such as Safe Schools/Healthy Students, Middle School Safe and Drug Free School Coordinators, and School-to-Work.

- **States have played a major role in fostering collaboration across services to overcome the problem of categorical funding.** The seven state agencies partnering in Missouri's Caring Communities initiative successfully requested a joint appropriation from the state legislature, an accomplishment that has fostered the integration of other funding streams connected with the program. On the national level, the expansion of the Ed-Flex Program, which allows states to waive selected federal regulations for local district programs, may help the process of combining funding.

- **States have provided other innovative sources of funding.** There is an increasing use of children and family trust funds, vehicles that will probably be used to house some states' expected tobacco settlement money. Some states also allow special taxing districts, used to pay ongoing expenses that lawmakers want to keep separate from the general school appropriations. These districts have the advantage of being difficult to remove from the books once established. Policymakers should be aware that this approach often is not feasible in low-income areas, and it can be politically unpopular. There can also be difficulties with earmarking funds since legislatures often cut other funding streams for the initiative.

- **Local districts and schools also use non-traditional means to augment their resources.** Many of these ap-

proaches, such as collecting user fees and leasing facilities, or garnering donations from district-based foundations and local booster clubs, are strategies used by wealthier districts. However, all schools can take advantage of shared or cooperative arrangements. Examples include shared use of athletic fields and grounds with the local parks and recreation departments, augmenting the school's counseling and mental health services with graduate student interns, or cooperative arrangements with businesses involving student apprenticeships or career shadowing. The exchange of services can be as simple as the school providing space for a clinic that a local hospital staffs for free.

Schools do not always have to seek outside assistance, however, as there are more and more opportunities for increased flexibility within the traditional budget. Many schools use the discretionary Title I funding in creative ways, including supporting staff positions. Also, districts are shifting more to site-based budgeting. Under this approach, the district designates a total operating amount for each school, but the school creates the operating budget. This provides more flexibility to move funds between categories, reconfigure staff positions, or support new initiatives. Many consider site-based budgeting a necessary tool for whole school reform.

Finally, funds should be solicited with the end use in mind. Just because there is money available does not always mean it can be applied to the specific needs of the school or coalition. By focusing on the goals of the program, schools select funding sources that contribute to rather than divert from the school's primary objectives.

A Local School District's Financial Strategy

In 1998, Prince George's County, Maryland was released from 26 years of court-ordered busing and intends to return to a neighborhood school system by building 13 to 26 new schools. Although the state pledged funds to cover some of the costs, Prince George's was having trouble raising the rest of the revenue due to a county cap on property taxes that requires county officials to get voter approval for new fees or tax increases.

County officials realized that they could create some economies in the cost of the new buildings by sharing facilities with the park service. This had an added advantage because the state park commission was not subject to the county tax cap. The state legislature removed a major impediment to the plan by granting county officials the authority to build schools on property not owned by the school board. The result is that the county will build seven joint school-community centers at a savings of up to $3 million per site.

The joint arrangement keeps the school off-limits to adults during the instructional hours but allows the students to use the community center facilities for athletics and other activities. Community groups have access to some classrooms after school. The school board and park commission contribute jointly to the operation and upkeep of the complex.

Besides the economic advantages, county officials see the arrangement as a way to customize services to neighborhoods where they're most needed. School officials believe it will foster greater parent involvement. As one county school board member said, "It's really important to make the connection between people in the community and the schools, and this is literally a connection" (Nakamura and Spinner, 1999).

Strategic Financing

Cheryl Hayes of The Finance Project encourages policymakers to develop a strategic financing plan before beginning a new program. The plan should be closely aligned with the priorities and objectives of the initiative. As part of the planning process, policymakers should ask themselves the following questions:

- What are you trying to finance?
- What are the expected fiscal needs over the life cycle of the initiative? Will those needs fluctuate over time (e.g., does the initiative require more money in the beginning and less in the end)?
- Do current patterns of public and private spending adequately support the initiative? Will they in the future?
- If not, can current spending be redirected to new purposes?
- What will it take to redirect current spending?
- What other sources of public and private sector funding are available?
- Who are the critical decision makers? How can they be persuaded to support your efforts?
- What is the expected return on the investment? For example, a long-term return might best be financed by public revenue, while a foundation might be in the best position to fund an initiative with a short-term return.

Limits on Funding May Necessitate Targeting Resources

While there are a number of types and combinations of funding sources available, there is not enough to do everything for every school or student. An alternative is targeting resources to those schools or students most in need or those that benefit the most from a particular strategy.

There is a growing body of research that examines the benefits and costs of policy options, which can help inform resource allocation decisions. For example, the short- and long-term benefits of smaller classes in the primary grades have been well-documented. At-risk children in particular demonstrate the greatest benefit from this intervention. However, a forthcoming study by the American Institutes of Research and RAND estimates that it could cost up to $6 billion across the nation to reduce class size to 18 in those grades; this does not include the extra $30 billion that will be needed to keep pace with rising enrollments over the next decade. Given this information, policymakers may decide it costs too much to implement class reduction across all primary classes and instead target classes serving at-risk children.

Targeting resources raises issues of equity. At a time when equalization of funding dominates the state financing of school districts, there may be reluctance to allocate additional resources to selected districts or to schools to benefit certain students. However, targeting funds can help restore equity in terms of providing opportunities for learning. Many interventions have a greater benefit for at-risk students who often do not have as many opportunities outside the school.

The settlement of a funding reform court case in New Jersey wrestles with some of these issues. In *Abbott v. Burke*, a New Jersey court case dating back to 1981, urban school advocates asked for a revision of the state's

funding formula to bring spending in the 28 neediest urban districts to the level of the wealthiest districts in the state. In a series of rulings ending in May 1998, the state supreme court ordered equalization of funding but also concluded that the 28 districts should get additional funding beyond the equalization because of their greater needs. Among the additional interventions, the court endorsed expanded pre-school programs, a strategy found to improve readiness-to-learn, especially for at-risk children.

Sustainability of Resources Must Be Addressed from the Beginning of a Program

Too often new initiatives depend on fragile funding sources. Many grants, for example, provide seed money to assist in demonstration or start-up programs, rather than continuing support for operating costs. A survey by the Institute for Educational Leadership found that one-quarter of the districts queried used private donations to help fund student-linked health and social services.

Programs often face and survive some funding instability. Sometimes guidelines for qualifying are modified, funders move on to new interests, or the allotted amount of the grant award runs out. Although some pieces of the total funding puzzle might change, programs need stable core funding to ensure the credibility and continuation of its basic elements. Without core funding, it is more difficult to attract other funding contributions.

Sustainability can be enhanced by diversifying the funding sources, maintaining program visibility, organizing constituent support, and providing effective leadership. It is also important that funding stability be addressed before the program is implemented. The box on page 33 provides guidelines for establishing a strategic funding plan.

Resources

The federal government has a new website that provides program and funding information for after-school activities (www.afterschool.gov). By clicking on *Finding Federal Dollars*, the user accesses a searchable database keyed to the purpose of the funding and the kinds of organizations qualifying for it. The initial listing provides a general description of the programs; clicking on a specific program provides such details as eligibility, application process, and funding history.

The National Association of State Legislatures (NCSL) has information on how states use both federal block grants and state revenue to support school social and health services programs. This information can be accessed through NCSL's homepage at www.ncsl.org/prorgams/health/pp/schlfund.htm and clicking on the *State Revenue Database Now Available* heading.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has established a website that includes the School Health Finance Project database, which provides information on various sources of federal, state, and private sector funding. To access this database, click on the *Funding Opportunities* heading on the homepage of the CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health at www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash.

Appendix A
Presenters to the Study Group

January 1999
Alexandria, Virginia

- **Raising and Educating Children in a Socially Toxic Environment**
  Dr. James Garbarino, Co-Director, Family Life Development Center, Cornell University

- **The Impact on Student Achievement**
  Dr. David Grissmer, Associate Research Director, RAND Corporation
  Dr. Cindy Wolford Symons, Professor, Health Education, Kent State University

- **What Is the Role of the Education Community in Addressing the Social Issues that Face Today's Children and Youth? A Local Response**
  Evangeline Wise, Program Developer, Challenger Campus Instructional Center

March 1999
Washington, DC

- **What Are the Budgetary Implications of Confronting Social Issues?**
  Cheryl Hayes, Executive Director, The Finance Project

- **Building Partnerships to Help Schools Confront Social Issues**
  Martin Blank, Director for Community Collaboration, Institute for Educational Leadership

June 1999
St. Louis, Missouri

- **Caring Communities**
  Joan Solomon, Coordinator, Caring Communities and School Improvement Initiatives, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Appendix B
The New Brain Research

Recent research has provided pictures of how the brain develops, a process that is a product of inheritance and experience. That development begins soon after conception as the two hemispheres of the brain are formed. Initially the neurons are undifferentiated (known as "equal potentiality"), but they soon migrate and begin developing the functions associated with the major areas of the brain. For a while, even after birth, neurons retain some of their flexibility, which allows other areas to take over a function.

The growth of connections between neurons occurs at a rapid pace in a child's earliest years. Various types of learning occur most easily during certain "critical" or "sensitive" periods. For example, from birth to year one is a sensitive period for language development. By six months, there are pathways in the brain for the baby's native language, thus the importance of talking and reading to children from the beginning. By ages two to three, the brain has nearly twice the connections as in adulthood. The totality of experiences during infancy impact on the ways in which the brain is "wired." By age three, this early wiring of the brain becomes the foundation for development in every aspect of life.

The next seven years are characterized by both active growth of new connections and elimination of connections that are weak or have not been reinforced. From age three to age ten, these two activities are in balance. This time span is crucial as children develop in the areas of cognition, language acquisition, and reasoning.

After age ten, the withering away of connections exceeds the now lower rate of synaptic growth, which reaches adult levels by age 16 or 17. Although the rate of synaptic growth is lower, new connections are made throughout life. The brain remains capable of learning regardless of age.

These discoveries will have enormous implications as more applied research is conducted. For example, the research suggests that many childhood disabilities—ranging from attention deficit disorder to cerebral palsy—might be addressed by "rewiring" the brain at an early age. Early music education might significantly increase mathematical and engineering skills, while babies might be exposed to foreign languages before they lose their ability to distinguish the subtle sounds of other languages.

Psychologists caution overusing the findings to date. More research needs to be done to understand the consequences and prevent overloading children at an early age. In addition, the new emphasis on the early years should not be at the expense of older children who continue to need opportunities to learn.

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Other NASBE Publications that Address Social Issues include:

- **Caring Communities: Report of the National Task Force on School Readiness** redefines school readiness and presents a vision for what schools, communities, families, and federal and state governments must do if the nation is to meet the important national goal of ensuring that every child comes to school ready to learn. The Task Force was chaired by then-governor Bill Clinton. (1991, 56 pp., $10.00)

- **Schools without Fear: The Report of the NASBE Study Group on Violence and Its Impact on Schools and Learning.** Recent tragic events in schools highlight the need for whole-school efforts to promote safety and discipline. This report focuses on the importance of improving the overall school environment as a key way to enhance the safety of students; facilitating the formation of basic skills to enable young people to understand and resolve conflict nonviolently; and providing a continuum of sanctions for students who have been disruptive or delinquent. (1994, 32 pp., $9.00)

- **Code Blue: Uniting for Healthier Youth**, the report of the National Commission on the Role of the School and Community in Improving Adolescent Health, calls on citizens to make the health of adolescents a national priority. After reviewing the alarming state of adolescent health today, the report provides a number of recommendations for action by schools, communities, and government. The Commission was co-sponsored by NASBE and the American Medical Association. (1990, 52 pp., $6.00)

- **I Wish...** is the up-close story of children living in Washington DC, and of the neighbors, school programs, and after-school centers that help them grow up in neighborhoods that are close-knit yet scarred by violence and poverty. Using ethnographic observation as well as the voices of the children, the book traces links between some central themes in children's lives and the policies to address these concerns. (1992, 62 pp., $5.00)

- **The American Tapestry: Educating a Nation.** This policy guide for infusing multiculturalism into education takes the view that all facets of education must be changed to take into account the increasing diversity of the nation's population. (1991, 32 pp., $7.00)

- **Coordinated Services for All Children and Youth.** NASBE Issue Brief. (1997, 16 pp., $5.00)

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